

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for increasing the bowl life of a cereal product, said method comprising
 - (a) contacting said cereal product with substantially pure water or with steam for a time sufficient to hydrate the surface but not sufficient to permit the water or steam to hydrate the interior of said cereal product, and
 - (b) drying said cereal product to its original water content,thereby increasing the bowl life of the cereal product.
2. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said contacting is by spraying water on said cereal product.
3. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said contacting is by misting said cereal product with water.
4. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said water is at least about 90% pure.
5. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said water is between about 50 and about 150° F.
6. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said water is between about 70 and about 100° F.
7. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said cereal product is a ready-to-eat breakfast cereal.

8. (Previously presented) A method of claim 7, wherein said ready-to-eat breakfast cereal is a flaked cereal.

9. (Previously presented) A method of claim 8, wherein said flaked cereal is selected from the group consisting of a corn flake, a wheat flake, an oat flake, a barley flake, and a rice flake.

10. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said cereal product is a fried or baked cereal chip.

11. (Original) A method of claim 10, wherein said fried or baked cereal chip is a corn chip.

12. (Original) A method of claim 10, wherein said fried or baked cereal chip is a tortilla chip.

13. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein the improvement is an increase in bowl life of a ready-to-eat ("RTE") breakfast cereal.

14. (Original) A method of claim 13, wherein said RTE cereal is selected from a flake, an extruded cereal piece, and a nugget.

15. (Original) A method of claim 14, wherein said RTE cereal is a flake.

16. (Currently amended) A method for reducing the friability of a potato chip or of freeze-dried food, said method comprising

(a) contacting said potato chip or freeze-dried food with water for a time sufficient to hydrate the surface but not sufficient to permit the water or steam to hydrate the interior of said potato chip or freeze-dried food, and

(b) drying said potato chip or freeze-dried food to its original water content,

thereby reducing its friability.

17. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said contacting is by spraying water on said potato chip or freeze-dried food.

18. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said contacting is by misting said potato chip or freeze-dried food with water.

19. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said water is between about 50 and about 150° F.

20. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said water is between about 70 and about 100 ° F.

21. (Currently amended) A method for increasing shelf life of a shelled nut, said method comprising

(a) contacting said nut with ~~water, not containing~~ water which does not contain a preservative, ~~and~~ without boiling the nut, and

(b) promptly drying said nut to its original water content,

thereby increasing its shelf life.

22. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said contacting is by spraying water on said nut.

23. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said contacting is by immersing said nut in water.

24. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said contacting is by pouring water over said nut.

25. (Original) A method of claim 21, further comprising subjecting said nut to light abrasion in the presence of said water.

26. (Original) A method of claim 25, wherein said mild abrasion is caused by contacting said nut with a second nut.

27. (Original) A method of claim 26, wherein said nut is moved against said second nut by placing said nuts in a movable container and moving said container.

28. (Original) A method of claim 26, wherein said nut is moved against said second nut by placing said nuts on a surface and agitating the nuts.

29. (Original) A method of claim 26, wherein said nut and said second nut are of different types.

30. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said nut is a peanut.

31. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said nut is selected from the group consisting of almond, cashew, walnut, hazelnut, pecan, macadamia, pistachio, Brazil nut, and filbert.